

Military Options for Students with Disabilities

With the acceptance of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), more opportunities have opened up for students with disabilities after they graduate.

Many individuals with disabilities either currently work for, or have worked for the U.S. Military in one branch or another, or as part of the *civilian workforce*. Opportunities are available for students with disabilities going in as *enlisted* or as a *commissioned* officer as well. The differences between these three areas, and the *education* programs will be discussed in this brochure.

Amazing accomplishments have been made by some of our more prominent American Military leaders that had Attention Deficit Disorder and/or Learning Disabilities:

- General Westmoreland served as Superintendent of West Point, commander of U.S. military advisors in South Vietnam, and U.S. Army Chief of Staff.
- President John F. Kennedy served as a Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy, a U.S. Congressman, a U.S. Senator, and the 35th President of the United States.

The United States Military in its active form requires that all enlisted and commissioned personnel be on “active duty”. This means one must be physically, emotionally, and psychologically ready at a moment’s notice to serve the U.S. (if needed, ready to go to war). This does include the Reserves and National Guard forces.

The Civilian Workforce

The Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard all have a civilian workforce. These are civilians who work on U.S. military bases in everything from barbershops and bowling alleys, to engineering, education and nuclear science. They also make up a large amount of the work force in companies like McDonald Douglas and Raytheon, which carry government contracts. *As civilian military personnel, ADA compliance procedures are administered.*

A federal mandate states that all U.S. Military bases must have 10% of their civilian work force made up of those with disabilities. The U.S. Navy proudly boasts that they have been ranked # 5 in the nation of employers of individuals with disabilities; this includes the private sector corporations.

Enlisted vs. Commissioned

As an *enlisted* man/woman, one enters into the military *without* a college degree. An enlistee is able to move up the ladder with a lot of hard work. One can reach the upper ranks of an enlisted officer without obtaining a college degree. The military will allow one to obtain a degree after you enter, but this is a much more difficult task. One would be serving on active duty while taking university courses on a part time basis.

Those students who are worried about taking college classes but are still interested in the military can take advantage of the enlisted segment of the armed forces. Students can enter the military and be trained for jobs using hands-on skills; avoiding the typical core classes that scare many students away from getting a degree. The enlistees attend trainings that are job specific -

which do not involve subjects like math, English, foreign languages, etc., which are needed for a college degree.

A *commissioned* officer means one enters the military *after* getting a college degree, or obtains his/her degree after entering the service. There are programs that provide officer's training and/or military scholarships to those interested in entering the armed forces after college.

Education-Based Military Programs

Members of the U.S. Congress for each congressional district offer Military Academy Appointments, which result in a tuition-free education. To attend any of the academies, one must (at a minimum) obtain a letter of recommendation from a congressman, senator, or the state's governor. Potential cadets must also be able to pass all military entrance exams, and have appropriate academic scores. (See resources on the back for contact information for each of the academies: Army-West Point; Navy-Annapolis; Air Force-US Air Force Academy; and Coast Guard-US Coast Guard Academy. *Note:* the Marines do not have their own academy, they attend the Navy's Annapolis.)

ROTC stands for Recruit Officer Training Corps. These programs do allow one to obtain high school and/or college credit. The way students move up through the ranks of the cadets is by their PFT scores (Physical Fitness Test), leadership qualities and their overall academics.

Those that are interested in continuing in the ROTC program after high school may attend a university in Arizona or anywhere in America that offers ROTC. Those that offer ROTC in Arizona are ASU, U of A, NAU and Embry Riddle Aeronautical University (see Arizona University information on back).

Students with disabilities may enter the ROTC programs if they can meet the physical and academic requirements for entry into the program; and can handle the ROTC class academically and physically "without" assistance. *Note* ROTC classes can be taken without entering the program for the first two years if space is available. Also the ROTC program is competitive.* (Competitive means one has to compete against other students for the position and/or scholarship.) Students may enter the program on ROTC scholarships (competitive), self-pay, or on other types of competitive scholarships. To be eligible for active duty, students must be able to pass the physical examination, have acceptable scores on their aptitude test (ASVAB) and SATs or ACTs. (The average SAT score for an ROTC scholarship is 1200, and for ACT is 24).

At the university level, students with disabilities will receive any necessary accommodations during all regular core classes. *Due to the fact the ROTC programs are for military preparedness, they do not provide for ADA compliance for ROTC classes. All students must be able to handle the ROTC academic and physical components by themselves.* For example, a student with learning disabilities might be able to complete the ROTC class without outside help, and pass the physical fitness portion. Yet, he may need lots of help with the English and Math requirements for college graduation. For those courses, he could obtain accommodation services through the Disabilities Compliance Office on campus.

Reserves - National Guard - Coast Guard

These branches are great for those who wish to stay closer to home (normally in their home state). The Reserves and National Guard allow men/women to serve two days a month and two weeks per year for 4-6 years. They are able to work at a regular full-time job outside the military if they wish (**Reservists can be activated by the President during war time and serve in other countries or combat areas, same as full time active duty soldiers*). There is also an officer's training program offered to college students going fulltime to an accredited 4-year university. This takes place during their four-year commitment to the Reserves or Guard. Like ROTC, when they graduate from college, they may go into their preferred branch of service as a commissioned officer; or be an officer in the National Guard or Reserves.

The Coast Guard is a full time position. One is stationed along the U.S. coastline. Those wishing to become an officer may attend the Coast Guard Academy in New London, CT. Entry into the academy is the same as the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines.

Dispelling Myths

Myth: If a student with ADHD passes all entrance exams and physical fitness requirements, they can enter the armed forces?

True: Yes they can, but it will depend on the medications the student has taken, when taken, and the duration of medication taken, if any.

Myth: If a student has a visual impairment he cannot join the military.

True: True, but he can still work in the civilian workforce on base, or work for a civilian corporation, which carries a military contract.

Resources

Academies

Air Force

US Air Force Academy <http://www.usafa.af.mil/>

Navy/Marine

Annapolis

www.nadn.navy.mil/

ARMY

West Point

www.usma.edu/

Coast Guard

US Coast Guard Academy

www.cga.edu/

US Armed Forces

US Air Force Recruitment Center

www.af.mil

602-833-1215

Arizona Naval Recruitment Center

www.navy.mil

1-800-USA-NAVY

US Marine Recruitment Center

www.usmc.mil

1-800-MARINES

US Army Recruiting Office

www.army.mil

1-800-USA-ARMY

US Coast Guard

www.uscg.mil/uscg.shtm

1-800-GET-USCG

Reserves

www.defenselink.mil/ra/

Air National Guard, 800-TO-GO-ANG

Army National Guard, 800-GO-GUARD

Civil Air Patrol

www.capnhq.gov/

602-392-7503

Private website with additional military career and scholarship information. www.usmilitary.com

Arizona Universities Military Programs

University of Arizona (Tucson)

University's homepage: www.arizona.edu

Army, Navy/Marine, Air Force ROTC

520-621-3705, Disability Resource 520-621-3705

Northern Arizona University (Flagstaff)

University's homepage: www.nau.edu

Army, Navy/Marine, Air Force ROTC

888-MORE-NAU, 928-523-9011

Disability Resource 928-523-8773

Arizona State University (Tempe)

University's homepage: www.asu.edu

Army, Navy/Marine, Air Force ROTC

480-965-9011, Disability Resource 480-965-1234

Embry Riddle Aeronautical University (Prescott)

University's homepage: www.pr.erau.edu

Air Force ROTC and Civil Air Patrol

800-888-3728, 928-777-3728

Disability Resource 928-777-3700

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Air Force ROTC.

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